

**Demographic Change Task Force**  
**Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday, October 29, 2008**  
**Ellen Stone Room (Cary Memorial Building)**

**Present:** Marian Cohen (2020 Vision Committee Liaison), Margaret Coppe (School Committee Liaison), Ben Esty, Bebe Fallick, Candy McLaughlin (Assistant to the Town Manager), Carl Valente (Town Manager)

**Other members not present:** Dan Krupka, Yukari Scott, and Stephanie Singer

The meeting began at 7:35pm.

The first order of business was a vote to accept the amended minutes for the meeting held on 9/24/08. The rest of the meeting involved presentations by the Directors of the Social Services and Health Departments.

**1) Presentation by Charlotte Rodgers (Acting Director of the Social Services Department)**

Ms. Rodgers began by describing her background as well as the organization and staffing of the Social Services Department (SSD, now Human Services Department). She then described the six major services provided by her department:

**1) Information and Referral, Assessment, Crisis Intervention, and Case**

**Management:** SSD works with the Fire, Police, and Health Departments to provide these services and provides on-going case management as needed.

**2) Community Outreach:** SSD promotes awareness of various services and programs using newsletters, cable TV, website, etc.

**3) Senior Health Outreach Program:** SSD provides ~20-30 nursing, home, and wellness visits per month.

**4) Adult Supportive Day Care Program:** SSD administers the Mill Street facility which provides social day care (non medical care) for seniors with mild to moderate impairments from Lexington and surrounding towns. The facility provides transportation, meals, and day care for a subsidized cost of ~\$32 per day. The number of people using this facility has decreased in recent years—currently there are 59 people using the facility.

**5) Veteran's Services:** The Veteran's Agent, Bob Martin, is available one day per week and as needed. He provides advocacy services and helps with issues of homelessness, substance abuse, and benefits.

**6) Youth Services:** SSD provides programs and support on family and parenting issues as well as evictions often working closely with the school system.

After describing the services provided by SSD, Ms. Rodgers then presented some statistics from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) on the use of these services in

recent years. The data showed a dramatic increase in outreach and health screening activities (flu and blood pressure clinics). The data also showed a decrease in the activities performed by the Veteran's Agent.

Ms. Rodgers ended the presentation by highlighting several important trends. First, there has been an increase in the number of family and mental health cases often with greater requests for financial assistance. With less federal and state support available, budgets will be stretched to provide these services in coming years. Second, with an aging population—the fraction of the population over 85 is the fastest growing segment—the demand for senior services is rising. And third, the current financial crisis is increasing demands for youth and family service (e.g., due to evictions).

## **2) Presentation by Gerard F. Cody (Health Director)**

Mr. Cody began with meeting by describing his background and the staffing of the Health Department (HD). In a slide presentation, he described the Department's three key mandates:

- 1) **Environmental Mandates:** The HD conducts restaurant, septic, and pool inspections as well as various waste collection/disposal programs.
- 2) **Community Programs:** The HD tracks communicable diseases, runs flu clinics, and provides health education.
- 3) **Emergency Preparedness:** In a relatively new area, the HD prepares for major epidemics and disasters (surveillance and response activities).

Mr. Cody then described some of the important trends he is seeing as the Health Director. First, there is a demographic change whereby children are less likely to live with or near aging parents, which creates a problem when these senior citizens need assistance of one kind or another. One example of a growing problem is people living in unsafe or unhealthy housing situations due to hoarding/collecting, a problem that is complicated by the existence of mental illness and physical limitations. The Health and Social Services Departments regularly collaborate to address these kinds of problems. A second demographic change is workforce diversity. Because the HD runs awareness programs (e.g., handling food safely) and is responsible for inspections, they are limited in their ability to communicate effectively with employees who speak an increasing number of languages and come from an increasing range of cultures and backgrounds. The HD has begun to use an interpreter service called "Language Line" to address some of these language challenges.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 2008, at 7:00pm. The likely topic will be the demographics of the Lexington school system (students, staff, and special education).

Minutes submitted by Ben Esty.